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ne Remedy for nemployment

ALFRED R. WALLACE

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THE REMEDY FOR UNEMPLOYMENT.

BY DR. ALFRED R. WALLACE.

THE reason why I wrote the present pamphlet (which first appeared in the "Socialist Review," and is now reprinted in a slightly modified form) was that, although there is a small body of avowed Socialists in Parliament, not one of them has, so far as I am aware, upheld any of the fundamental principles of Socialism as a means of dealing with the greatest of present-day problems—that of chronic unemployment and starvation all over our land. Let me illustrate what I mean by a few examples. Perhaps the most fundamental and universally admitted axiom of Socialism is that all production should be, primarily, *for use and not for profit*; and the next in importance is that the true or proper *wages of labour is the whole product of that labour*.

But neither in Parliament nor out of it has a single voice been raised to show that these principles *must* be adopted in any permanent solution of the problem, or to explain how they *can* be applied far more easily and economically than any of the suggested alleviations. All the talk has hitherto been of securing trade union rates of wages for out-of-works of every kind; and the underlying idea has always been that of the non-Socialist worker—that

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the Government provision of work must *not* be looked upon as permanent, but only as enabling the worker to live till the capitalist employer again requires him.

An equally non-Socialist view was put forth by one of the most respected Socialists in Parliament when he advocated the immediate construction of light railways all over the country in order that when labour was brought back to the land the products could be carried economically to market, implying that the "products" were to be sold, thus competing in the market with those of other producers, lowering prices, and altogether ignoring the great Socialist principle of "production for use." In the discussion of this question it has been totally overlooked that by a proper organisation of the labour of the permanently or temporarily unemployed, as well as of all those whose employment does not supply them with the means of a thoroughly sufficient and healthy existence, all the necessities and comforts of life can be produced in our own country, just as they were produced down to a few centuries ago. I will now proceed to the exposition of the whole subject.

In order that those who have not read the Labour Party's Unemployed Workmen Bill may understand why it could not have succeeded, a short statement of its essential provisions may here be given.

The first clause provides that the "Local Unemployment Authority" under this Bill shall be the council of every borough or district of over 20,000 inhabitants, and for the rest of the county the "County Council." Clause 3 declares that "it shall be the duty of the Local Unemployment Authority to provide work for him" (any workman registered as unemployed) in connection with one or other of the "schemes" hereinafter provided, "or otherwise," or failing the provision of work, "to provide maintenance, should necessity exist, for that person and for those depending on that person."

This is the essential part of the clause, with a condition that the wages are to be "not lower than those that are standard to the work in the locality."

Then there is to be a Central Unemployment Committee to "frame schemes," and generally look after the Local Unemployment Committees, which are to be established by every local authority, and are also to "frame schemes"; and the "schemes" of the four or five hundred local authorities are all to be submitted to the Local Government Board for revision or approval. Nowhere is any guide given to the essential principles which should underlie these hundreds of schemes, and we can easily imagine the delay, the confusion, the cost, and the almost certain failure of "schemes" initiated in so haphazard a manner.

The whole conception of the Bill is, in my opinion, wrong. Unemployment is not a local phenomenon, but national, and even world-wide. It is a symptom of disease in our existing civilisation, and must be treated, if with any chance of success, on broad national lines, and with national resources. Even the one definite suggestion in the Bill—that "schemes of national utility" might be undertaken to employ the out-of-works—however good in itself, was here altogether out of place. For such schemes—afforestation, reclamation of foreshores, drainage works, roads, etc.—are all either not reproductive at all, or not for many years, in the meantime increasing taxation, and thus perhaps producing further unemployment; while they could only employ a mere fraction of those in distress (none of the women) and, when completed, would leave the problem exactly where it was when they were started.

The discussion in Parliament showed a clear recognition of the fact that it is quite impossible to remedy such chronic and widespread unemployment as exists now by finding work for the half-starved population in the hundreds of different occupations at which they have been engaged; but, strange to say, no one seemed to be aware that it is by no means impossible—that it is, in fact, comparatively easy—to enable these same people to *produce for themselves the primary necessities of life* which are their *immediate* and *permanent* need. What is required is to organise and combine the whole of the unem-

ployed into local groups, each group or community being primarily made up of a due proportion of workers who have been engaged in the production of some of these *necessaries*, and who will form a nucleus for the training of others for similar work. These various occupations are comparatively primitive, and there is every reason to believe that they will be found among the unemployed in about the same proportions as in the whole population. The thorough organisation and careful supervision needed cannot, however, be left to the random, and often antagonistic, opinions of hundreds of local authorities, but must be undertaken by the Central Government itself, and that only when the guiding *principles* and the practical *procedure* have been carefully thought out, clearly defined, and fully discussed in Parliament, before being embodied in law. It is pre-eminently a work to be devised and carried out by the Executive Government itself.

I will now endeavour to show in some detail how this can be done, what will be its results, and what are the various facts and arguments which render its success a certainty if it is fully and honestly carried out.

The recent discussion of the problem of unemployment, both in Parliament and in the Press, affords a remarkable proof of how difficult it is to enforce attention to new methods of dealing with great social problems, if such proposals are made a little before their time. Thus only can it be explained that not one Liberal, Labour, or Socialist Member of Parliament seems to be aware that a thorough and carefully-worked out scheme for dealing with the unemployed problem was published about twenty years ago, was re-issued a year or two later in a cheap edition by a well-known London publisher, was widely read and greatly admired, and—as was to be expected at *that time*—was very soon forgotten. I feel sure that this book must be in many public and private libraries, especially those of Liberal or Radical Clubs, but neither by Members of Parliament nor by any writers in the reviews have I once seen it referred to. Yet its title

alone should have caused it to be read at this time, since it so fully and clearly states the problem which has received so much attention, but no solution, during the last few years. It is as follows: *Poverty and the State, or Work for the Unemployed; An Inquiry into the Causes and Extent of Enforced Idleness, together with a Statement of a Remedy Practicable Here and Now.* By Herbert V. Mills. London. Kegan, Paul, Trench, and Co. Price one shilling. 1889.

Now, this book is pre-eminently a practical one, and the bold claim in its title is fully justified by its contents. Mr. Mills was a Poor Law Guardian in Liverpool for many years, where there were nearly three thousand inmates of the workhouse. He thus had unusual opportunities of becoming acquainted with the poor, and of studying the various problems of pauperism, such as unemployment, food-supply, the various occupations of paupers, and other matters. He further obtained information and advice from experts in agriculture, and in the various trades and occupations of the men who came under his notice, and has thus been able to give us detailed estimates and calculations of the greatest value in formulating practical methods of utilising the labour of the unemployed to the greatest advantage, for their own benefit. He also visited and carefully inquired into the detailed working of the various Dutch Beggar and Labour Colonies, and obtained from them valuable information as to the methods that tend to success, as well as of those that either diminish the success or lead to failure.

Having myself encountered many disappointments in books, claiming to expound new and important ideas both in physical and economic science, I was fully prepared for another failure here. But I quickly found that this was really what it claimed to be, and I at once did all I could to call public attention to it, first in one of my annual addresses to the Land Nationalisation Society (in 1892), and much more fully in a chapter I wrote for Edward Carpenter's *Forecasts of the Coming Cen-*

ture, published in 1897. This chapter I republished, with some important additional facts and arguments, in 1900, in my *Studies, Scientific and Social*; yet all appears to have been in vain. If the authors of the "Unemployed Workmen Bill" had drawn it so as to follow closely Mr. Mills' scheme, and had fully explained this scheme in their speeches by means of the facts, illustrations, and methods so well and concisely given in his book, I feel sure that the result of the debate would have been very different, and that not only Socialists, but the whole body of Labour Members, a large majority of Liberals, and even many Conservatives, would have voted in its favour; in which case the Government would have been obliged either to adopt it, or to bring in a Bill of their own on similar lines.

The chief reason why Mr. Mills' scheme, if embodied in a Bill, should, and I think would, receive the support of a large majority in the present House of Commons is, that it utilises and combines in an admirable manner the most important, and at the same time the least disputable, methods of both Socialism and Individualism. To illustrate this I will give a few condensed extracts from his summary of the main features of his proposals, with some remarks of my own.

(1) In each county or union, tracts of land from 2,000 acres upwards shall be purchased or taken over by the State or Local Authority, and be prepared with suitable houses, buildings, tools, machines, etc., for the accommodation of about 4,000 or 5,000 occupants, men, women, and children; with skilled foremen and organisers to carry out the various operations of agriculture, and the trades and manufactures required to produce food, clothing, and other necessities for the inhabitants.

(2) It is shown, by the facts and calculations of experts, that the labour of a properly assorted population, for four hours daily, will, when in full working order (say after a year), produce *all* the necessities of life in abundance. One hour more is added for the costs of skilled supervision and

another hour for the maintenance and schooling of the children, and for the support of the aged and the sick as they arise.

(3) In order to effect this the ordinary methods and rules of the best kinds of industrial work must be adopted; but, after working hours, all will be as completely free from control by the various industrial officials as the people of any prosperous and well-ordered town or village.

(4) That the director of each of the Co-operative estates shall encourage the workers to make their homes and work-places as healthful, convenient, and beautiful as possible, giving them *advice* as to how this can best be done, and *assistance* in doing it.

(5) That for work done co-operatively no money wages shall be paid, the equivalent of such work being the *whole net produce* of the labour. This will be—the provision of comfortable homes, abundance of good food and fuel, with a good supply of clothing, the latter being chosen by each person from a variety of suitable material and design kept in the stores. In addition to this, the children would all receive the best education, and as they grew up would each be trained in accordance with their faculties or tastes, in two or three useful occupations.

At least four-fifths of all the work on the estate *shall be done for home consumption, not for sale.*

(6) Every worker will be enabled to employ his spare time for his own use or profit, so as to obtain any luxuries or pleasures he might desire. Some would have land on which to raise choice fruits or vegetables for sale; others a workshop; the young women might do dressmaking, or open shops for the supply of small luxuries not produced co-operatively. All they required would be supplied at wholesale price, to be repaid by instalments out of the profits.

On this subject Mr. Mills well remarks: "I can easily imagine that for the sake of the retriever, the pigeons, the tobacco, the poultry or rabbits, the greenhouse, the bicycle, the piano, the library, the concert, or the theatre, many morning and evening

industries would spring up quickly, without any other stimulus from the director than that which exists in every human heart. The acquisition of the luxuries of life might well be left to the ingenuity and activity of private enterprise."

I would myself further suggest that the rules and restrictions on these estates should be as few as possible, and only such as are absolutely essential for the comfort and well-being of all. Especially should all healthful amusements and social enjoyments be provided for; while such serious offences as repeated drunkenness, immorality, or violence should be punished by absolute dismissal or expulsion.

It should be made quite clear from the first that these estates or colonies are established for the provision of *permanent and enjoyable homes* for all who desired to take advantage of them, *not* as mere temporary shelters in times of depression. There would, of course, be no compulsion to remain, but anyone who was dissatisfied with his surroundings and left could not again be admitted.

Another point of importance is, that the organisation of the whole community under an official director, whose rule must necessarily at first be despotic, is not intended to be permanent. When the colony became thoroughly self-supporting, and its inhabitants fully appreciated the benefits they enjoyed under the co-operative system, and had been gradually trained in the principles and methods essential to success, the organisation would be steadily modified in the direction of a self-governing community.

With this end in view, the Director, as well as the several heads of departments of industry, would, after the first year, each choose a few of the more intelligent and industrious workers to form small Consultative Committees. With these he would hold informal weekly meetings, to talk over the special affairs of their departments, and consider whether any improvements in organisation were advisable, either in the interests of the workers themselves or of the whole community who con-

sumed or utilised the products of the work. Later on these committees might be added to by the introduction of workers chosen to represent the rest; or, perhaps better still, by the admission of those who had been longest in the community, and were therefore best acquainted with the needs and wishes of all its members. These would automatically become members after a certain period of work, the older retiring as the younger entered, and would ultimately constitute the whole committee. Suggestion-books should also be kept in the public rooms, in which every member, without exception, could, if he wished, make proposals or suggestions on any matter affecting the well-being of the whole community, or any section of it. These books would be examined by the committees and by the Director, who would decide upon their merits. Public meetings would also be held monthly or quarterly, at which the decision as to each of the suggestions would be announced, and the reasons why some were adopted and others rejected explained, while occasionally a suggestion would be given a trial and afterwards the opinion of a general meeting taken upon its adoption.

This plan was, I believe, first tried at Ralahine (in 1832) by Mr. E. T. Craig, and it has since been adopted by a few great industrial concerns with excellent results. It is found that useful suggestions are made by quite ordinary workmen, and even by boys, affecting both the convenience of the workmen and economy of production. But more important is its educational and moral value, which would be especially great in a co-operative association, by giving to every worker a definite status, and making him feel that he is not only a labourer in a great organisation, but that he is allowed to express his own views as to what is essential for the good of all. This feeling, and the careful attention given to all suggestions, tends to give confidence in the management, and ensures willing and thoughtful attention to duty.

But here some of my readers will no doubt object,

how can it be shown that such estates or colonies could and would produce all the necessities of life with such a comparatively small amount of labour? We know what John Burns told us of the enormous cost of the Labour Colonies at Hollesley Bay and Laindon; why should not these be equal failures? The answer is simple. The colonies now being tried, as well as that of General Booth in Essex, are a kind of rural workhouses, with no idea of permanency, no home life, no freedom of action, no prospect of a future. Neither is there any effective grouping of workers, no sufficient variety of occupations, no attempt at the production of all the necessities of life by those who consume them. There is also, apparently, a large sale of produce in competition with outside workers, wholly different from the system of *production for use* which is the very basis of Mr. Mills' scheme.

The scope of this scheme and its far-reaching and permanent effects on unemployment are totally unlike those of our present costly and temporary Labour Colonies. It would at once absorb the unemployed workers in scores of different trades and occupations, all being employed in supplying directly the wants of the community of which each formed a part. The wheat grown for food would employ millers, machinists, sack-makers, bakers, etc.; the sheep and cattle, supplying meat, milk, butter and cheese for all, would also by the intervention of tanners, curriers, saddlers, shoemakers, etc., supply all the leather goods; while the dairy outfit would require the work of tinmen and other skilled mechanics for the pans, pails, churns, presses, etc. The bones and horns might be used to make handles of domestic cutlery and for old-fashioned but useful lanthorns; perhaps combs and brushes might also be made, while the refuse fat would be made into soap for the use of the community. Wherever suitable clay occurred bricks and tiles would be made, as well as drain pipes and coarse pottery for various domestic uses. Even unlimited sugar for a population of 5,000 might be produced from home-grown beet-root with suitable

pressing, boiling, and refining machinery. The wool of the sheep would be cleaned, spun, and woven into all the chief forms of clothing and household articles required; while flax grown, prepared, spun, and woven at home would supply the needful underclothing and linen of various kinds.

Artificers in wood and iron would be occupied in the supply and repair of carts, waggons, ploughs, and the simpler agricultural machines; while water or wind mills (or both) would give the power for the various kinds of machinery, for electric light and power-transmission, and probably also for warming and cooking purposes.

All these various industries would require a considerable engineering plant, and a body of trained workers, while a staff of joiners, cabinet-makers, plumbers, painters, and paper-makers, and in smaller numbers, compositors, printers, and book-binders, with store-keepers, clerks, and porters, would find constant or occasional work; and there would be comparatively few workers of any kind who would not be able to learn some one or other of these occupations, even if their own special skill in some less familiar industry was not called for. And besides all these, a considerable body of labourers would be wanted; and all adults as well as the older children would at times of pressure be called to assist in some of the varied forms of simple farm and garden work, such as hay-making, fruit-gathering, and harvesting.

An immense advantage of such an organised co-operative community (and one that can hardly be over-estimated) is the comparative certainty of returns and independence of adverse seasons that would thus be introduced into agriculture. Much of our hay is now deteriorated by cutting being delayed beyond the period of maximum nutriment, or damaged by not being dried and stacked at the earliest possible opportunity. But with a large and interested population close at hand, ready and willing to assist at an hour's notice, and with the best machinery and appliances always ready, a single

fine day in an otherwise adverse season might enable a hay or corn crop to be secured in good condition which, without this assistance, would be irretrievably ruined. And when everyone would be thus helping to save his *own* crops—the very “daily bread” that he himself and his family would enjoy during the coming year, the work, however hard, would become a pleasure, and every hour of the long summer’s day (or even of the night as well) would be utilised by relays of workers. We can well imagine with what determination and energy the work would be carried on, and with what enthusiasm and rejoicing would the holiday succeeding such an effort—a true “harvest-home”—be partaken of by all.

Another point may here be usefully dwelt on. Though at the first starting of such colonies it may be advisable to have large common dwellings and meals, it should at an early period be possible for all who wished it to have cottages or houses of their own; and these should first be provided for married couples and their families. These could, however, continue to take their meals (or any meal) at the common table, or in lieu of these could draw rations of food from the stores and cook for themselves. Home-life, so dear to many of us, would thus be rendered possible for all who wished it, while still retaining the economies and securities of co-operative work.

Yet further, keeping in view the one object of the establishment of these co-operative villages—that of enabling the unemployed to work profitably for themselves; if after a few years’ residence any of the workers wished to have the opportunity of trying an independent life on the land, he should not only be permitted to do so, but should be helped to obtain land for a small holding in the immediate vicinity, and, if his record in the colony justified it, have implements and stock provided for him, to be repaid by easy instalments. Thus might be exhibited, side by side, the comparison of men with similar training adopting the methods of co-operation and individualism; and the results, in the degree of comfort and contentment attained by

each as years went on, would be exceedingly instructive.

With regard to the chances (or, as I maintain, the *certainty*) of the economic and moral success of colonies or villages organised with *the one end of enabling people to provide by their own labour all the essentials of a secure, a happy, and a contented life*, it may be well to adduce a few illustrative facts and results.

Between the years 1870 and 1880, workshops and a garden of fourteen acres were started at the Newcastle-on-Tyne Workhouse on which to employ the ordinary able-bodied inmates. In a very short time all the vegetables required for the whole of the paupers was easily grown, with a considerable surplus which was disposed of to local shopkeepers; and at the end of three years this land is stated to have produced a profit of £339 annually. In almost every department of work more goods were produced than the house required, so that a reserve of a two years' supply of boots and shoes was accumulated, while the whole of the inside fittings of new wings to the workhouse were executed by the inmates.*

At Ralahine, in Ireland, eighty-one men, women, and children, all ordinary labourers of the lowest class, and with a very bad reputation in the district, farmed 618 acres of land, including bog and waste, under a committee chosen by themselves (Mr. Craig, who kept the accounts and supervised the household, being ignorant of agriculture), and they not only paid the very high rent of £900 a year (in produce estimated at market prices), but in the course of

* Mr. Mills quotes this from an article in *Chambers' Journal* of January 1st, 1881. Mr. Jas. H. Rodgers, for many years Chairman of the Guardians, has been so good as to inform me that the system of employing paupers in various kinds of productive industry is still in force at Newcastle; but that owing to a change in the class of inmates it is not quite so satisfactory. Over two-thirds of the number are now either chronic invalids, aged, or lunatics, with children who are mostly boarded out. Still, all who can do anything are employed productively, and nearly all the vegetables required by 1,000 to 1,500 inmates are grown on 15 acres of land cultivated by male paupers.

three years brought waste land into cultivation, purchased a reaping-machine, and at the same time increased their capital and lived well and contentedly. Then, the owner, having gambled away his property, suddenly disappeared, while the tenants were evicted and all their property confiscated by the Irish Court of Chancery!

At the Dutch colony of Frederiksoord, a miscellaneous body of "unemployed" have, under wise administration, converted an absolutely barren waste of moorland into what Mr. Mills terms "a paradise in the midst of a wilderness." Here a large number of "free farmers" have been trained, who now support themselves in comfort and independence, while another body of labourers carry on the ordinary work of the estate (which must be largely educational and unproductive), and yet so nearly support themselves that the Director informed Mr. Mills that he did not use agricultural machinery because it would make it difficult to find work for all, and they would then be less easily managed.

Mr. Edward Atkinson, the great American statistician and advocate of capitalism, has given striking estimates of the productiveness of labour when aided by modern machinery. Two men's labour for a year in wheat-growing and milling will produce 1,000 barrels of flour, barrels included, which will give bread enough for 1,000 persons. But as *we* grow more bushels of wheat per acre than is grown in the American wheat fields, we could certainly produce *our* bread on the spot quite as cheaply, if not much cheaper. Again, he tells us that one man's labour produces woollen goods for 300 people, or boots and shoes for 1,000. Now, as far as productiveness goes, spinning, knitting, weaving, or shoe-making machines suitable for the employment of a dozen or twenty men or women could, in our co-operative colony, be worked quite as economically as in a great factory where 1,000 hands are employed—perhaps even more so, because no overseeing would be required, and all would be close to their work; while as the hours would be shorter and would alternate with outdoor or house-

hold work, the workers would be healthier and their labour more effective.

Again, as every inmate of such a colony would be trained in at least two distinct occupations, one involving mostly outdoor work, a large proportion of these textile fabrics would be made during wet days and long winter evenings, and would thus utilise time that is now often wasted.

Another great economy in such a colony is, that the whole of the middlemen's and retailer's profits would be saved, as well as the cost of the various forms of advertising, including commercial travellers and the high rents of retail shops in good situations, and that of railway freights, cartage, and other costs of world-wide or cross-country distribution. The result of all these needless expenses is shown by the well-known fact that, on the average, goods of every kind in common use are *produced* for about half what they are sold for by the *retailer*; and to this great loss must be added, in the case of the individual producer for sale, the loss of time expended in selling and buying, and the frequent difficulty of finding a purchaser except at a ruinously low price. It is these numerous economics at every step of the process that justify Mr. Mills' careful estimate of six hours' daily work being ample to supply *all* the necessaries of life for a well-organised co-operative population, including the children, the sick, and the aged; while a small farmer works usually ten or twelve hours to secure the same result, and can only succeed in doing so under somewhat favourable conditions, and with much greater risk of failure.

One other point remains to be considered. What would be the initial cost of such colonies as are here suggested, up to the time at which they became self-supporting? Here, too, Mr. Mills has given us the answer. By a careful estimate, founded on ascertained facts, he shows that the *total* cost, both of the land and of the stock, buildings, and other appliances, together with a half-year's food, would only equal the amount of two years' total expenditure for the same number of paupers. The result of

this outlay would be that after two or three years the necessity for poor-rates would cease. It would therefore be an enormous saving, even if each union or county *purchased* the land and stocked it as part of its Poor Law expenditure, and this would be the case even if Mr. Mills' calculations are found to be too favourable to the extent of even 50 per cent. (which I consider wildly improbable). But I believe that if the scheme was carried out under an Act of Parliament and under the general supervision of the Board of Agriculture, still greater economies might be effected, especially in the matter of land. For power should be given in the Act to take any land required at a valuation based on the net rental now obtained by the owner (or on the valuation in the rate books), for which amount he should receive Government Land Bonds. As soon as the colonies became self-supporting, and had absorbed most of the unemployed, so that pauperism in the ordinary sense was abolished, the respective local authorities would only have to pay the interest and sinking fund on these bonds, which would be a mere trifle as compared with existing poor rates, and would itself disappear in the course of less than two generations.

The farmers and labourers, as well as mechanics or others, who might be living upon the land thus taken over, would have the option of remaining upon it in the capacities for which they were severally fitted, as superintendents, foremen, or labourers; or if they preferred to leave would receive a reasonable "compensation for disturbance."

There are always people who will not be satisfied with any proposed remedy for a great evil unless it deals with every possible phase and form of it, so as to abolish it completely at once, and for ever. Some of these will be sure to object that the worst of the unemployed—the tramps and the men who will not work under any conditions—will still remain; and they will ask triumphantly: "How will you bring these into your system? They

will flock into your colonies in winter to enjoy the good living and do nothing to earn it." There are two replies to this objection, which is really no valid objection at all. In the first place, it was not for *this* class of men that the "Unemployed Workmen Bill" was brought into Parliament, or for whom legislation has been promised by the Government. It was not of *these* unfortunates that either Socialists or Liberals drew such vivid pictures of undeserved misery, but of the genuine workmen, the men or women whose one object in life is to obtain *work*, however hard, however it may injure their own health or shorten their lives, in order that they may *save their families from starvation*, or from the deservedly hated workhouse. The whole of this great and successful agitation has been in behalf of those willing and anxious to work, but to whom by our actual social organisation it is forbidden. It was for them only that the "Right to Work" was demanded—not the right to *food* while refusing to *work*. It is a sufficient reply to the objectors, therefore, that Mr. Mills' proposal really solves the problem as regards those very classes of workers for whom the "Right to Work" clause was drawn.

But, secondly, it is certain that the system of co-operative colonies here explained *would*, in the course of a few years, absorb also the so-called unemployable, who are in reality by no means numerous, and have *never yet been offered* the kindly assistance, the sympathetic treatment, the amount of liberty and the congenial surroundings they would find in these colonies. General Booth's experience at his Essex colony has shown that a considerable proportion of these men are easily reclaimable, and the system there is far less favourable and less educational than it would be in our proposed co-operative colonies.

Before concluding, I will briefly advert to a few matters of high public importance, involving great cost, much loss of time and energy, widespread physical and moral deterioration, and terrible

sacrifice of life, which would all be ameliorated and would ultimately disappear in *proportion as these co-operative colonies spread over the country.*

First and foremost, the cost of Old Age Pensions, which all admit to be absolutely necessary *now*, would steadily diminish with increase of these colonies, and ultimately become unnecessary. Next, the terrible mortality of infants, due to our present competitive manufacturing system, would rapidly disappear when the health and comfort of mothers were thoroughly safeguarded as a primary social duty. What would be the result of such a natural, simple, healthful, yet fully-occupied life as would prevail in these colonies may be judged by the condition of some of the German colonists in Central Brazil. A young friend of mine is now living among them. They subsist almost entirely on the direct produce of their own labour; they have large and healthy families, and his two nearest neighbours have twelve and eight children respectively, mostly grown up, *without having lost a single child.*

Then there is the enormous and ever-increasing system of inspectorship of factories and workshops, to guard against dangers of machinery, unhealthiness, and overwork, all quite unnecessary, and which would never even be thought of where there was no one to profit by such enormities.

Lastly, there is the curse of adulteration, ever increasing, pervading all commercial products, clothing, food, and even drugs, injurious alike to the health and the morality of the nation, and which inspectors and penalties have hardly any effect upon. All this would absolutely disappear when everything now adulterated would be produced in these colonies for home consumption, and *not* for the profit of capitalists; and this fact would certainly re-act upon the private manufacturers. The safety and healthiness of all the co-operative shops would soon *compel* private capitalists to improve the conditions of their factories under the penalty of not being able to obtain men or women to work for them.

A collateral but highly beneficial result of the

system here advocated is, that just as it extended and flourished, it would, by absorbing all surplus labour, raise the standard of wages over the whole country, and of itself produce that "minimum wage" that we may decree by law, but which, so long as our present system persists unchecked, we can certainly never enforce. The generally higher wages thus caused will almost all be spent on home-made products, and thus more than compensate for any diminution of foreign trade that may occur: for it must always be remembered that foreign trade is mainly carried on for the profit of the capitalist or to supply luxuries for the wealthy, and is little needed when all workers are enabled to produce the necessaries of life, co-operatively, for themselves.

Yet another important economy not yet referred to arises from the essential nature of a co-operative community producing everything for their own consumption, and therefore absolutely free from the faintest suspicion of adulteration. We have seen that Mr. Mills estimated that not more than one-fifth of the total produce would have to be sold in order to purchase articles or materials which the colonists could not produce themselves. Each colony would decide, or rather would find by experience, which articles it would thus produce in larger amounts than it needed—one might sell butter, cheese, and perhaps cream; another woollen fabrics; another shoes, etc., or some combination of these. But it would soon become known that everything made at the colony was genuine. The butter would not be margarine; the cloths and flannels would be wool throughout, the boot-soles would not be of brown paper; and the matches, the china-glazes and the paints would all be made of non-poisonous materials. The certainty that this would be so—everything being made primarily for *use* and not for *profit*—would ensure a large and constant demand for everything the colonists had to sell. They would thus be saved all the costs of advertising or of taking their goods to market; as was found to be the case with the best of the Communistic Societies in the United States, whose garden and farm

seeds, dried and preserved fruits, tubs, washing machines, traps, and chairs, are still widely known and sought after for their purity and good workmanship.

All the goods which the colony had for sale would thus bring the highest market prices with the minimum expenditure of time and labour; so that one fatal circumstance that caused the failure of so many attempts at co-operative workshops—the difficulty or impossibility of *selling* the produce—would never arise.

The result of this brief, but I believe accurate, examination of the capitalistic and the co-operative systems in their essential conditions and proved results, is to show that the former is inherently *wasteful* to an enormous degree, and so productive of physical and moral evil as to be incompatible with a true civilisation. In every part of the world it is alike productive of poverty, degradation, and crime for large numbers of the workers, and the latter perhaps in an equal proportion (though in different ways) for the capitalist employers also. Such a system stands condemned at the bar of reason, justice, and common sense.

I think I have now shown that the way to solve this great "Problem of the Unemployed" was clearly pointed out nearly twenty years ago, with precision, fulness of detail, and sufficient basis of fact and experience. But the time had not then come. The few read and appreciated the book, but it was generally ignored, with the usual cry of "Utopian"! Now, however, the *hour* has arrived, and here is the *Man* whose long-neglected book shows us clearly the lines on which alone we can successfully overcome the difficulty.

But a proviso has here to be made, which is of the most vital importance and which must always be kept in view. Even if the scheme here advocated is carried out to the letter, so far as its *methods* are concerned, complete success will only be attained if its organisers are imbued throughout with the human, the philanthropic, the brotherly *spirit* of

the propounder. This will depend almost wholly on the choice of men for directors of the several co-operative colonies. If the head is chosen for his supposed power of managing and governing large bodies of men, in the way our governors of prisons and masters of workhouses have been chosen; and if he enters on his duties with the one idea of compelling all to work alike, from the very first, and with that end draws up an elaborate system of rules, with fines and punishments to be rigidly enforced in the various departments of industry, then failure will be inevitable. Neither is the successful manager of a great factory or large estate more likely to succeed if he is a man who looks upon workers as mere "hands"—as parts of a great productive machine, each to be kept in his proper place, and to have no will of his own.

Our object should be to train up self-supporting, self-respecting, and self-governing men and women; and we should aim at doing this by developing the conceptions of solidarity and brotherhood—that good and honest work is expected from each because he benefits equally with every other worker in the joint result, and that it is therefore his plain duty to do his full share in producing that result. The type of men to be sought after are such as Mr. Craig, who, though a suspected stranger and supposed emissary of the landlords, yet gained the affection of a body of wild Irish labourers, and in a year of sympathetic guidance so changed their lives that, in their own words: "Ralahine used to be a hell; now it is a little heaven;" and Robert Owen, the self-educated Welshman, who in less than twenty years changed a population of over 500 persons, all Scotch mill-workers—who were living in chronic destitution and debt, and in habits of almost continuous drunkenness, dirt, and vice—into a cleanly, well-to-do, contented, and grateful community.

The methods by which these men produced such results should be studied by everyone who would undertake the directorship of one of the proposed co-operative colonies. For those who talk so con-

fidently about human nature being not good enough for any such co-operative life as is here suggested, I would adduce Owen's work at New Lanark as an unanswerable reply. I know of no more wonderful example in history, of the results to be obtained by appealing to men's higher feelings rather than to the lower and baser, than Owen's account, in his story of his own life, of how he stopped almost universal thieving, drunkenness, neglect, and other faults in his great body of workers, by means of his invention of the "silent monitor"—a little record on four sides of a tally, of each worker's conduct the day before, as indicated by four colours—black, red, yellow, and white, one of which only was displayed. These tallies were attached to each worker's place every morning, so that as Owen walked through the work-rooms he could see them both collectively and separately. At first the majority were black, while white was rare. But gradually the colours changed, and in a few years yellow and white prevailed. During all this time there were no punishments, either by fine or in any other way, neither did Owen ever scold a man, or even speak harshly to him. He merely, when the colour was black, looked at the man in sorrow; and he tells us, how after a time he could tell a man's conduct by his very attitude as he passed him, without looking at the tally.

It may be said, we have no such men now; but I think that is a mistake. Mr. Mills himself would probably be one of the first appointed; while a post as responsible director of 5,000 workers would be congenial to many of our broad-minded clergy, to the more educated among the officials of the Salvation Army, and to such sympathetic writers about the poor as Mr. Whiteing, Mr. Zangwill, and many others. It should be considered a position of high rank and importance, equal, say, to that of a judge or a bishop, and none should be appointed who are not in perfect sympathy with the avowed objects of the "colonies," and determined to do all in his power to make the experiment a success. The salary should not be high; in fact, the lower the

better, in some respects. The office would almost certainly attract the best men, since it would enable them to initiate and develop one of the greatest social reforms ever undertaken in a civilised country. They should, of course, have practically a free hand, and be judged only by *results*. They must have complete power to change the heads of departments, if they found them difficult to work with, or of characters unsuited to the task of rendering the labour of the community at once efficient and attractive to the workers.

There would, I believe, very soon arise a healthy rivalry between different colonies, in which every individual, from the Director to the youngest worker, would bear his part, as to which shall exhibit the best results in the various industries carried on; in the cleanliness, comfort, and even elegance of their domestic arrangements and general surroundings; in their amusements and their studies; and especially in the general contentment, order, and happiness of the whole community.

To attain such a result would be a truer honour to our country than all our past and prospective victories, gained at the cost of untold misery to both victors and vanquished, vast burdens of taxation, rivers of blood and tears. To attain such a beneficent result seems now actually within our reach; and my chief hope is that I may live to see it inaugurated, and that all parties and classes alike shall for once forget their prejudices and antagonisms, and work together for the success of some such scheme as is here laid before them.

It is after a considerable acquaintance with the literature of this subject, from the time of the grand pioneer, Robert Owen, down to the present day, that I have arrived at the most absolute conviction that Mr. Mills has pointed out to us the one true road to success, and that any considerable divergence from it will lead to failure. I therefore most earnestly call upon all social reformers, and especially all members of Parliament, whose duty it will be to legislate upon the subject, to make a careful study of his small volume—but really *great*

and *illuminating* work—to read it carefully throughout; to study it in all its parts; to imbue themselves with its spirit as well as with its facts, its principles, and its arguments; to familiarise themselves with the practical results of co-operative undertakings so far as their opportunities permit; and, by means of the knowledge they will have gained from Mr. Mills, satisfy themselves as to the *essential causes* of failure or success.

Above all these things, let them see that when the time of legislation, and of giving practical effect to the legislation arrives, the principle of the whole scheme shall be, in Mr. Mills' words: "That within the bounds of the 'Co-operative Estates' we shall endeavour to cultivate able and tender-hearted men, and brave and independent women; and *not* to accumulate wealth."



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